

We Claim:

1. A system for sorting items, said items comprising a surface having a destination address thereon, said system comprising:

a. a scanner for producing an image of said surface;

b. an OCR processor associated with said scanner and an address directory, said processor comprising means for receiving said image, means for decoding said image and means for determining if said decoding successfully arrived in a set of characters having a match in said address directory, means for receiving rule based characters and for limiting a plurality of database entries based upon said rule based characters, means for redecoding said image and means for determining if said redecoding successfully arrived in a set of characters having a match in said address directory; and

c. an image controller associated with said processor and a video encoding station, said controller comprising means for directing said image from said processor to said station when said decoding is unsuccessful, other means for directing said image and a data input from said station to said processor after operator entry of said rule based characters.

2. The system according to claim 1, further comprising another processor associated with said address directory, said another processor comprising means for creating a list of directory entries limited by said data input and means for transmitting said list to said OCR processor.

3. The system according to claim 2, wherein said directory is integral with said station.

4. The system according to claim 2, wherein said OCR is integral with said workstation.

5. The system according to claim 2, wherein said directory is integral to said OCR processor.

6. The system according to claim 5, wherein said controller further comprises means for directing said list to said station when no match is determined.

7. The system according to claim 6, wherein said station comprises means for receiving input from an encoder, said input comprising an indication of one of said list.
- 5 8. The system according to claim 1, further comprising a bar code printer associated with said controller, said printer printing a bar code on said item in response to a command from said controller.
9. The system according to claim 8, wherein said command is made by said controller in response to an unsuccessful decoding.
- 10 10. The system according to claim 9, further comprising a bar code reader located downstream from said bar code printer, said bar code reader facilitating retrieval of items stored based on bar codes printed thereon.
- 15 11. The system according to claim 1, further comprising a delay loop for delaying sorting of said items.
12. The system according to claim 1, wherein said delay loop is located upstream from said bar code printer.
- 20 13. The system according to claim 1, wherein said scanner is a high resolution scanner.
14. The system according to claim 1, wherein said item is a mail piece.
- 25 15. The system according to claim 1, wherein said item comprises one of a flat mail piece, a parcel and a form.
16. The system according to claim 1, further comprising:
 - 30 a. a track for transporting a plurality of items past said scanner;,
 - b. a feeding device for receiving said items and selectively directing said items to said track; and
 - c. means for retrieving said items from a container and directing said items to said feeding device.

17. The system according to claim 16, wherein said container is a magazine.
18. The system according to claim 1, wherein said station comprises a monitor comprising
means for displaying a plurality of images substantially simultaneously to an encoder.
- 5 19. The system according to claim 18, wherein said portion comprises initial letters of an
address element manually entered into said station.
- 10 20. The system according to claim 1, further comprising means for using said OCR means
to verify if a database entry is said destination address if said limited set comprises
said database entry.
- 15 21. The system according to claim 1, further comprising means for requering said
database for a match of characters in said fixed number of keystrokes and any
characters unambiguously decoded in said step of decoding.
22. The system according to claim 1, wherein said OCR means comprises an OCR process
in functional association with OCR software, a database, and a memory.